

Message Text

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FM AMEMBASSY CANBERRA

TO USMISSION USUN

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AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN

AMEMBASSY DUBLIN

AMEMBASSY LUXEMBOURG

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS

C O N F I D E N T I A L CANBERRA 0639

E.O. 11652 GDS

TAGS: AS, UNGA

SUBJECT: ADVERSE AUSTRALIAN PRESS COMMENTS ON WILLESEE
CANDIDACY FOR 30TH GA PRESIDENCY

REF: USUN 293

1. SUMMARY: AUSTRALIAN PRESS HAS BEGUN TO CARRY REPORTS
AND EDITORIALS SUGGESTING WITHDRAWAL OF CANDIDACY OF FOR-
EIGN MINISTER WILLESEE FOR PRESIDENT OF THE GENERAL ASSEM-
BLY. END SUMMARY.

2. AUSTRALIAN PRESS JAN 30 CONTAINS REPORT THAT FOREIGN
MINISTER WILLESEE HAS TOLD OFFICIALS OF DEPT OF FOREIGN
AFFAIRS THAT HIS BID TO BECOME PRESIDENT OF 30TH UNGA WILL
HAVE TO BE RECONSIDERED IF CANDIDATE FROM COMMON MARKET
BLOC NOMINATES. (DFA HAS TOLD EMBASSY FROM TIME THORN CANDI-
DACY FIRST MOOTED THAT, IF IT WERE SERIOUS, WILLESEE HAD LIT-
TLE PROSPECT OF ELECTION.)

3. PRESTIGIOUS MELBOURNE AGE COMMENTED ADVERSELY ON WILLESEE
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CANDIDACY JAN 30. THE AGE EDITORIAL ENTITLED QTE. "AN EGO

TRIP TO THE U.N." END QTE. SAYS WILLESE IS AS QUALIFIED AS ANY OTHER CANDIDATE TO BE THE PRESIDENT OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY AND THAT THE U.N. FOR ALL ITS LIMITATIONS HAS A USEFUL AND IMPORTANT ROLE TO PLAY IN WORLD AFFAIRS. THE EDITORIAL OPPOSES HIS NOMINATION ON THE GROUNDS THAT IT IS UNNECESSARY. QTE. "AT THE MOST IT WOULD PROVIDE AUSTRALIA WITH A CHANCE TO GRANDSTAND BEFORE THE WORLD. IT IS A CHANCE WE CAN DO WITHOUT.

QTE. "FOR ONE THING, THE LOBBYING EXERCISE HAS ALREADY INVOLVED THE GOVERNMENT IN SOME DUBIOUS HORSE-TRADING. WILLY-NILLY WE HAVE HAD TO INVOLVE OURSELVES IN, AND TAKE MORALISTIC STANDS, ON A NUMBER OF ISSUES WHICH ARE NOT OUR REAL CONCERN. AS A NATION WE HAVE NO NEED TO INCUR THIS SORT OF DEBT. IF SENATOR WILLESEE WERE TO BE ELECTED, AUSTRALIA WOULD ALSO BE EXPECTED TO GO ON BUYING INTO CONTROVERSIES AND PONTIFICATING ON ISSUES WHICH ARE NOT ITS RIGHTFUL BUSINESS OR CONCERN. ALL THIS FOR A CHANCE TO STRUT AND FRET UPON THE U.N. STAGE. IT IS A POINTLESS, EGO-TRIPPING EXERCISE, OUT OF KEEPING WITH OUR STATUS AS A MIDDLE POWER. OUR NATIONAL AMBITIONS SHOULD BE MORE MODEST AND LESS GRANDIOSE." END QTE.

4. ANNOUNCEMENT BY PRIME MINISTER WHITLAM ON JAN 29 THAT GOA WOULD NOT PRT NOT ISSUE VISAS TO PERMIT FIVE-MEMBER PLO DELEGATION VISIT AUSTRALIA IN LATE FEBRUARY HAS PROBABLY ALSO HAD ADVERSE AFFECT ON AUSTRALIAN CANDIDACY. DECISION TAKEN ON LARGELY DOMESTIC GROUNDS (SHARP OPPOSITION WAS EXPRESSED BY AUSTRALIAN TRADE UNIONS AND JEWISH ORGANIZATIONS), BUT LINKAGE BETWEEN DECISION AND WILLESEE CANDIDACY WAS OPENLY DISCUSSED. ARAB ORGANIZATION SPOKESMAN IN MELBOURNE COMMENTED JAN 28 THAT, IF PLO DELEGATION VISIT WERE CANCELLED, WILLESEE WOULD NOT RPT NOT BE ELECTED PRESIDENT OF UNGA. HARROP

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